
The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park camping byelaws – applications for exemptions

Description

Reference Number:	2019/0105/BYCAUT	O
Application Type:	C. Bye Authorisation (11)	
Days and Dates Applied for:	Request to camp one night in 2019	
Location:	Former Caravan & Camping S	
Purpose:	Duke of Edinburgh expedition	
Applicant:	Colin Dickson	

Example of camping byelaw authorisation – advertised on Park’s weekly planning list 19 6th M

The camping byelaws, which were intended to ban people from staying overnight in the four camping management zones without a permit, also allowed people to apply for exemptions in certain circumstances. These included Duke of Edinburgh award expeditions and Events requiring the erection of tents. This post takes a look at how the National Park has managed this over the last three years and prior to the Park submitting a review of the byelaws to Scottish Ministers.



The former camping and caravan site at Ardgarten where camping is now banned and D of E exped camp (see above)

Do the published figures bear scrutiny?

Since the inception of Camping Byelaws I have been recording what is published on the Planning Portal Weekly Planning Schedule under Byelaw Exemption Applications and Byelaw Authorisation Applications. (Exemptions are where someone applies for a piece of land to be exempted from the byelaws while Authorisations allow for groups to camp in areas where camping is normally banned).

The content of the National Park Authority's Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws 2017 Annual Update for Scottish Ministers (National Park Authority Board Meeting 10th Dec 2018 ([see here](#))) surprised me:

5.11 Permit Authorisations During the 2018 season, the total number of organised group applications received increased by 40% from 47 in 2017, to 66 in 2018.

During the 2017 camping season only 13 applications in total were published. 8 were for Duke of Edinburgh (D of E), 4 for events/activities ie. Food & Drink Festival, Activity camp, national Citizen Service and a Scout Group walking the West Highland Way. A fifth was for an outdoor business at Lomond Shores.

In 2018 only a total of 9 applications were published. 4 for D of E which is significantly down considering 2018 was the Year of Young People, 5 events/activities (Drymen Music Event, Young Adults & Instructors, Loch Ard Sailing Club for the whole season, Filming for 2hrs on 2 days, individual to camp)

- 12 authorisation requests were received and approved for permission to erect a tent inside a Camping Management Zone, but outside of a permit area, representing no change from 2017. (7 were camping, 5 were events)*
- 46 applications are attributed to youth groups and organisations applying to camp within permit areas or at a campsite at no charge. The remaining applications were either not required or declined. Applications may be declined based on the timeliness of the submission or unsuitability of the proposal. (1 not required, 5 declined as too late to process).*

Confusing or what? I am no mathematician but given the second bullet point the figures just don't stack up.

Neither do the reference numbers on the Weekly Planning Schedule. 2017 ref.nos. go from 2017/0001 to 2017/0037 whilst 2018 ref. nos. go from 2018/16 to 2018/63 !

The claim of 47 organised group applications in 2017 and 66 in 2018 does not add up either. Taking the reference numbers in 2018 at face value that totals 47 applications and even if they did start at zero that still only gives us 63.

There has been no published application for Luss Highland Games in 2017, 2018 nor 2019. How can NPA Rangers miss seeing that high profile event with lots of tents in the very tourist orientated village of LUSS?

Drymen Show (agricultural event) did not apply for exemption in 2017 or 2018 (but have done so in 2019).

Of course when questioned the Park have ready answers to cover themselves :-

I emailed the NPA Visitor Operations Manager in 2018 to query these ‘missing’ applications and was informed *that: ‘The Drymen Show application came in quite late in the day and so did not go up on the list and this is the same for the Luss Highland Games.’* So are Luss Highland games late every year? And ‘whilst it is preferable for us to put ‘exemptions on the weekly planning schedule, there is no such requirement for ‘authorisations’. Prevarication? Cover?

The second bullet point above also provides a ‘get out of jail free’ card.

It will be interesting to see what the NPA come up with viz a viz figures for this camping ‘season’. This year’s published exemption applications for the Camping Management Zones total only 10. Three for Duke of Edinburgh groups whilst ‘Other’ totals 7 ‘Army Cadets, Wedding ‘Season’ Balmaha, National Car Event, L. Ard Sailing Club ‘season’, Drymen Show, Festival at Balquidder, National Citizen Service.

All in all it would appear that rather than encouraging groups of youngsters to enjoy and experience the outdoors in Scotland’s first National Park the Camping Management Byelaws are having exactly the opposite effect. Having to apply for permission to camp is one more layer of bureaucracy and red tape for the organisers of expeditions for youngsters that they can well do without!

Where are youth groups in the research on the camping byelaws?

In the Research document ‘*Evaluation of visitor experiences of camping in the National Park*’ (see [here](#)) commissioned by LL&TTNPA there is a section on ‘Profile of Campers’. The only reference to Groups is their ‘composition’:

Profile of campers Demographics which includes Age, Gender & Location; Children & Working status; Type of facilities used; Group composition; ‘

Group composition: children

- Among these, the average number of children per group was just over two (2.1). This included children from a range of ages.
- Wild campers had the largest average group size (3.2).

There is no mention of groups participating in Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme (D of E)

In the section on **Planning & booking Information sources** there is again **no mention of the requirement to apply for exemption**

However, on page 52 of the 66 page document I came across one reference to D of E

Qualitative interviews

Background

- Participants who took part in the qualitative interviews had used a range of facilities, reflecting the quantitative sample: 5 wild campers; 2 semi-formal campsites (1 of these was in a campervan, 1 in a tent); 2 motorhome/campervan on site with no facilities; 1 formal campsite (in a campervan).

- **A range of group types** were represented: 3 couples, 3 families, 2 solo travellers, 1 with friends and 1 in a wider group (a Duke of Edinburgh expedition leader).

Can we assume from **Group composition: children** above that there were only a very small handful of youngsters in this D of E group? Unlikely I would have thought given the effort one has to put in to organise such a trip.

The Duke of Edinburgh leader reported dangerous jet skiers on the loch, speeding between/amongst the young people in canoes. (Qualitative interviews Disruptions & improvements p.57).

Then under the *Technical Appendix* **An incentive of Â£15 compensated respondents for their time and encouraged a positive response.**

These are the published NPA offerings. I leave you, the reader, to draw your own conclusions as to their adequacy.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. camping
2. Camping bye laws
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